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31 December 1958

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN



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DAILY BRIEF

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I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

NO

*USSR: Soviet planning chief Iosif Kuzmin may have been elected to the party presidium at the central committee meeting this month. A TASS broadcast on 27 December included his name in proper alphabetic order among members of the presidium attending a session of the Russian Republic Supreme Soviet. Kuzmin was transferred to the important planning job in May 1957 from a post on the executive staff of the party secretariat, and his election to the presidium would be logical, although there is no other evidence supporting it. [REDACTED]

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NO

Watch Committee conclusion--Berlin: The Berlin situation remains potentially dangerous and may develop into a crisis at any time although current Soviet efforts still appear directed primarily toward forcing counter-proposals and negotiations with the West. [REDACTED]

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NO

Watch Committee conclusion--Taiwan Strait: There were no significant developments noted during the past week which reflect on Chinese Communist intentions regarding the Taiwan Strait situation. [REDACTED]

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II. ASIA-AFRICA

NO

Watch Committee conclusion--Middle East: A deliberate initiation of large-scale hostilities in the Middle East

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is unlikely in the immediate future. The situation, however, remains precarious throughout the area.

In Iraq, Communist influence and activity, unless checked, continue to pose the threat of eventual Communist control of the government.

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Cyprus: Greek-Turkish conversations on Cyprus are now getting under way in Ankara. London indicates it will agree to any final settlement devised by Athens and Ankara, providing that the retention of British bases is assured. Britain's decision to carry out controversial provisions of its plan for interim self-government on the island could complicate the negotiations.

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DAILY BRIEF

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Ceylon: The Bandaranaike government's position, seriously weakened by the recent allegations of a coup plot implicating the prime minister, is being further damaged by a series of leftist-led urban strikes beginning on 18 December with which the government has not yet dealt firmly. Political tensions are likely to increase with more strike activity by the left and further consideration of coup plans by rightist elements. [REDACTED]

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British Foreign Office Views on Cyprus Settlement

London will probably accept any plan for a final Cyprus settlement devised by Athens and Ankara in the conversations on guaranteed independence getting under way in Ankara. The parties have already agreed to convene a tripartite conference with Britain if these talks succeed in reducing their differences. Final agreement will depend largely on the ability of the Greek and Turkish foreign ministers to convince their respective governments of the desirability of making concessions.

A British Foreign Office official said on 29 December that he believed the British cabinet would accept any plan agreed to by Athens and Ankara provided certain requirements are met. The most crucial point--retention of British bases--has already been assured by both Greece and Turkey, and provisions to guard against a Communist take-over would presumably be included in any plan.

The Foreign Office official stated that in January London intends to promulgate controversial provisions of its interim self-government plan for the island, particularly establishment of separate Turkish municipal governments. This action could antagonize the Greeks enough to jeopardize the talks. However, London's recent conciliatory gestures--public modification of its stand on partition and commutation of eight death sentences--suggest, that it may delay implementation as long as agreement appears possible.

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Labor Unrest Growing in Ceylon

The Bandaranaike government's position, already seriously weakened by the recent allegations of a conservative coup plot implicating the prime minister, is being further damaged by a series of leftist-led urban strikes with which the government has not yet dealt firmly. While Bandaranaike's 30 December decision to take personal charge of the strike negotiations and place Governor General Goonetilleke in charge of the port situation indicates an awareness of the need to halt the wave of strikes, the government does not appear to have a well conceived policy to replace its recent wavering tactics in dealing with the unions. If the strike situation is not brought under control by the government, the Trotskyite Lanka Sama Samaj party (LSSP)--which is behind most of the strikes--may expand the work stoppages, although fear of alienating the public is likely to cause it to stop short of a general strike. The economic confusion and increased political tension caused by the strikes may stimulate further consideration by rightist elements of plans for an eventual coup.

The agitation began on 18 December with a strike by about 3,000 LSSP-led port workers who were subsequently joined by a Communist port union. The government's willingness to yield to the strikers' demands apparently encouraged other unions, and strikes have spread to petroleum and bank employees and are threatened by employees of Colombo's principal business firms and of the island's nationalized bus line. Such strikes will further disrupt Ceylon's important foreign trade activities and cause increased inflationary pressures.

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